

Message Text

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10/45

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01

IO-11 AID-05 PC-01 /071 W

----- 046672

R 110543Z FEB 76 CORRECTED COPY FOR MCN

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8098

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

USCINCEUR

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS PINT ET

SUBJECT: DISRUPTIONS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

1. WELL TRAVELED GOJJAMI SOURCE JUST RETURNED FROM GOJJAM VISIT TO HIS FAMILY IN DEBRE MARKOS/DEMBETCHA AREA REPORTS THAT FIGHTING IS WIDESPREAD IN THAT PROVINCE. IN ADDITION TO GOVERNMENTALS VS. INSURGENTS, VARIOUS GROUPS ARE OPPOSING EACH OTHER AND IN SOME CASES PROVINCIALS ARE SIDING WITH THE GOVERNMENT AGAINST DISSIDENTS. SOURCE CONTENDS THAT MOST OF THE PROVINCIALS ALLIED WITH GOVERNMENT SIDE ARE LUKEWARM LOWLANDERS WHO HAVE BEEN ROUNDED UP BY EPMG FOR SERVICE AGAINST REBELLIOUS HIGHLANDERS OF THE MOTA/BICHENA REGION. HE REPORTS THAT ALTHOUGH GOVERNMENT TROOPS AND LOWLANDERS ATTEMPTED TO MARCH ON HIGHLAND INSURGENTS, MOST OF THIS PEASANT ARMY DRIFTED BACK HOME BEFORE RELUCTANT WARRIORS ENCOUNTER RESISTANCE.

2. SOURCE JUST RETRUNED FROM EXTENSIVE TOUR OF BEGEMDIR (MEMCON TO FOLLOW) REPORTS THAT MOST OF THE INSURGENTS THERE HAVE BEEN SUPPRESSED. THE ETHIOPIAN DEMOCRATIC

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UNION (EDU) REMAINS ACTIVE ALONG THE SUDANESE BORDER BUT

THE TOWNS OF METAMA, ABDERAFAI AND SETIT HUMERA REMAIN FIRMLY IN GOVERNMENT HANDS. FIT. ADMASSU BELAY REMAINS ACTIVE IN THE NEFAS-MOCHA REGION AND THERE IS SOME SPILL-OVER FROM THE INSURGENCY LED BY DEJ. BERHANU MESKAL DESTA IN LASTA, WESTERN WOLLO BUT OTHER WISE, PROVINCE IS QUIETER.

3. SEVERAL SOURCES HAVE TOLD AID DIRECTOR THAT THREE DEMONSTRATIONS, TWO OF THEM QUITE LARGE, AGAINST HIGH FOOD PRICES AND UNEMPLOYMENT OCCURRED IN DEBRE ZEIT AND AKAKI (JUST SOUTH OF ADDIS) DURING LAST WEEK IN JANUARY. DEMONSTRATIONS HAD STRONG ANTI-DIRG FLAVOR. ONE OF THE DEMONSTRATIONS WAS REPORTEDLY SUPPRESSED BY SECURITY FORCES FIRING AT DEMONSTRATORS RESULTING IN INJURY TO ONE OR TWO PERSONS. ANOTHER SIMILAR DEMONSTRATION OCCURRED IN ADDIS (ST. GEORGE'S SQUARE FEB 9).

COMMENT: ALTHOUGH UNEMPLOYMENT CONTINUES TO BE A PROBLEM AND SOME FOOD PRICES HAVE NOT DECLINED AS THEY USUALLY DO IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING HARVEST, WE ARE NOT ALTOGETHER CERTAIN THAT THE OSTENSIBLE REASONS FOR THE DEMONSTRATIONS ARE IN FACT WHOLE STORY. SINCE ANTI-DIRG DEMONSTRATIONS WOULD BE QUICKLY SUPPRESSED, DEMONSTRATORS MAY HAVE CHOSEN EMPHASIZE BREAD AND BUTTER ISSUES INSTEAD OF OPENLY EXPRESSING ANTI-EPMG SENTIMENTS. WE WILL CONTINUE TO INVESTIGATE THESE LAST INCIDENTS.
HUMMEL

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PARAMILITARY FORCES, INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION, LIMITED WAR, PUBLIC ATTITUDES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: morefirh
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976ADDIS01695
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760053-0577
From: ADDIS ABABA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760262/aaaacbrb.tel
Line Count: 85
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: morefirh
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <23 JUN 2004 by MartinML>; APPROVED <30 JUN 2004 by morefirh>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: DISRUPTIONS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE
TAGS: PINS, PINT, ET
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006